



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

PO Box 47890 • Olympia, Washington 98504-7890

Tel: (360) 236-4501 • FAX: (360) 586-7424 • TDD Relay Service: 1-800-833-6388

October 28, 2010

Dear Colleague:

We need your help in stopping the spread of pertussis! Pertussis, or whooping cough, is highly contagious and spreads easily by coughing and sneezing. A person with untreated pertussis can infect others for at least three to four weeks. Tragically, two infants in our state died this year from pertussis. Most infants get this disease from their parents or other family members.

As a health care provider, your advice plays an important role in your patients' decision to get vaccinated. Please help us:

- **Surround infants with a protective "cocoon" of immunity:**
  - ✓ Check pertussis immunization status of all your patients.
  - ✓ Vaccinate all women of childbearing age and postpartum patients against pertussis.
  - ✓ Offer or make a referral for pertussis vaccination for all household contacts and caregivers at least two weeks before the baby is due.
- **Take action against pertussis—make sure to:**
  - ✓ Test if you suspect pertussis. Delays in recognizing pertussis can lead to worse clinical outcomes and increased disease spread.
  - ✓ Treat for pertussis. Delays in treatment before and after hospitalization may increase the risk of fatal illness.
  - ✓ Report suspected and confirmed cases promptly to your local public health department.
- **Track your patients' vaccination status by using the CHILD Profile Immunization Registry.** The registry is a secure, web-based system for tracking immunizations of persons in all age groups. Best of all, it is free to registered users and can save your practice time and money. For more information or to register, call the CHILD Profile Help Desk at 1-800-325-5599 or 206-205-4141 or visit the Web site [www.childprofile.org](http://www.childprofile.org).

Communities need a high level of immunity to reduce the spread of pertussis. Immunity can wane as early as five years after immunization or infection. Most young children who get pertussis vaccine are susceptible again by early adolescence. This is likely the reason why pertussis continues to circulate; leading to hospitalizations and deaths of infants who are too young to get vaccinated.

For more pertussis information, visit the Department of Health pertussis web page at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Immunize/diseases/pertussis/default.htm>.

Sincerely,

Maxine Hayes, MD, MPH  
State Health Officer

